FROM THE BOOKSHELF NO. 153 AUGUST 10, 1976
JOHN ALBERT

"LYNDON JOHNSON & THE AMERICAN DREAM" BY DORIS KEARNS

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES ...FROM THE BOOKSHELF... A SERIES IN WHICH WE REPORT ON BOOKS AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY, JOHN ALBERT'S REPORT ON "LYNDON JOHNSON & THE AMERICAN DREAM" BY DORIS KEARNS, PUBLISHED BY HARPER & ROW.
HERE IS BOOK EDITOR _____.

EDITOR: A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE ENABLED THE AUTHOR, DORIS KEARNS, TO WRITE THIS BOOK. IN 1967, AS A STUDENT AT HARVARD, SHE WAS CHOSEN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS PROGRAM. THIS HONOR ENABLED HER AND OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE HER TO WORK AS SPECIAL ASSISTANTS EITHER TO THE PRESIDENT OR MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET. DESPITE HER ANTI-WAR ACTIVITY AND AN ESSAY ENTITLED "HOW TO REMOVE LBJ IN 1968," PRESIDENT JOHNSON TOOK A LIKING TO HER AND ARRANGED FOR HER TRANSFER FROM THE LABOR DEPARTMENT TO THE WHITE HOUSE. THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF A CLOSE ASSOCIATION THAT LASTED FOR FIVE YEARS. WHEN MR. JOHNSON ENDED HIS TERM IN JANUARY, 1969, SHE FOLLOWED HIM TO HIS TEXAS FARM WHERE SHE HELPED THE EX-PRESIDENT PUT TOGETHER HIS MEMOIRS.

AS A RESULT OF THIS CONSTANT ASSOCIATION, MS. KEARNS HAD MANY CONVERSATIONS WITH THIS COMPLEX MAN WHO REVEALED TO HER MUCH OF HIS PRIVATE SELF. IT IS THIS PRIVATE, LYNDON JOHNSON BEHIND THE FORMIDABLE PUBLIC FIGURE THAT IS DESCRIBED IN KEARNS' BOOK. ALONG WITH HIS DRIVE FOR POWER, HIS COERCIVE

EDITOR: (CONT) AND OFTEN CRUDE MANNER, WE BECOME AWARE OF HIS CAPACITY FOR GREAT GENTLENESS AND GENEROSITY.

MS. KEARNS IS OF THE OPINION THAT LYNDON JOHNSON'S CHILDHOOD WAS A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN HIS MAKE-UP. DURING THAT PERIOD, HE WAS TORN BY THE OPPOSING DEMANDS OF HIS MOTHER AND FATHER. HIS MOTHER URGED HIM TO THE INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS SHE HAD MISSED IN HER MARRIAGE; HIS FATHER, ON THE OTHER HAND, CONSIDERED INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL PURSUITS UNMANLY. BY ALTERNATELY GIVING AND WITHDRAWING HER LOVE, THE AUTHOR ARGUES, JOHNSON'S MOTHER CREATED IN HER SON A LIFE-LONG DESIRE TO BE LOVED AND APPRECIATED AND A FEAR OF BEING REJECTED. HIS FATHER, AT THE SAME TIME, INDUCED A DIFFERENT ANXIETY-- THE ANXIETY THAT HE MIGHT BE WANTING IN FORTITUDE AND PERSEVERANCE. WHETHER WE ACCEPT MS. KEARNS THEORY OR NOT, HER BOOK GIVES US INTIMATE GLIMPSES INTO JOHNSON'S LIFE WHICH ALONE MAKE READING IT WORTHWHILE.

WE FOLLOW THE FUTURE PRESIDENT FROM HIS ADOLESCENT YEARS IN THE LITTLE COLLEGE OF SAN MARCOS, TEXAS, WHERE HE WAS A LEADER IN STUDENT GOVERNMENT, THROUGH HIS RISE IN POLITICS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND THEN TO THE SENATE WHERE HE BECAME ITS MOST POWERFUL FORCE. THE AUTHOR GIVES US SOME REMARKABLE EXAMPLES OF HOW HE ACHIEVED THAT STATUS. ON HIS FIRST DAY AS CONGRESSIONAL ASSISTANT, FOR EXAMPLE, HE WOULD CONSTANTLY GO TO THE COMMON BATHROOM AND BRUSH HIS TEETH AGAIN AND AGAIN ALONGSIDE HIS COLLEAGUES. BY THIS MEANS HE LEARNED WHICH ONES HAD REAL INFLUENCE. IN THE HOUSE, HE MADE HIMSELF ALMOST INDISPENSABLE TO THE POWERFUL

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REPRESENTATIVE CARL VINSON. LATER, IN THE SENATE, HE ATTACHED HIMSELF TO SENATOR RICHARD RUSSELL OF GEORGIA. TO HIM, HE BECAME A DEFERENTIAL SUBORDINATE AND AN INVALUABLE HELPER AND FOR WHOM HE WAS ABLE TO PERFORM A WIDE VARIETY OF SERVICES. IN THIS WAY, HE GRADUALLY ACCUMULATED THE RESOURCES THAT ENABLED HIM TO STEP INTO THE MASTER ROLE OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER.

JOHNSON WAS A THOROUGHLY POLITICAL ANIMAL. HE NEVER RELAXED HE NEVER CEASED TRYING TO GAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEN HE HAD TO DEAL WITH. BY DISCOVERING THEIR INTERESTS, THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, HE LEARNED TO BEND THEM TO HIS WILL.

HE HATED TO BE ALONE; HE HAD TO BE WITH PEOPLE AND TALK. HE RARELY WENT TO MOVIES OR PLAYS BECAUSE HE DISLIKED SITTING QUIETLY IN A DARK THEATER FOR HOURS. PARTIES, HOWEVER, WERE A DIFFERENT MATTER; THERE HE COULD ALWAYS FIND SOMEONE READY TO TALK POLITICS. HIS ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT MOVED THE GENERAL RUN OF PEOPLE, AND HIS ALMOST UNBELIEVABLY STRONG INFLUENCE IN FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS AMAZING SUCCESS IN GAINING CONSENSUS AS SENATE MAJORITY LEADER.

RULES AND PROCEDURES WERE SECONDARY; HE WAS AN EXPERT IN CUTTING RED TAPE. HE SPENT LITTLE TIME ON INTELLECTUAL QUESTIONS; HE WAS A DOER, ALWAYS DIRECTING HIS ATTENTION TOWARD ACHIEVING RESULTS. HE RARELY INDULGED IN PUBLIC DEBATE, PREFERRING TO WORK BEHIND THE SCENES IN CONGRESSIONAL CLOAKROOMS (ANTE ROOMS). THERE HE COULD BE SEEN, PERSUADING,

EDITOR: (CONT) ARGUING, COMPROMISING UNTIL HE WAS SURE OF SUCCESS. THE NATURE OF THESE WHEELING-AND-DEALING OPERATIONS WAS SUCH THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND MANY SENATORS WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. GRUMBLING AND RESISTANCE WERE NOT SLOW IN COMING. BUT BY THEN, JOHNSON HAD BECOME SO POWERFUL, HIS HELP IN PUSHING THROUGH ANY PIECE OF LEGISLATION SO IMPORTANT, THAT THE OPPOSITION NEVER GOT ANYWHERE.

HIS MASTERFUL ABILITY TO MANIPULATE FIRST SHOWED ITSELF IN THE WAY HE PRESSURED SOUTHERN SENATORS TO LET THE FIRST MAJOR CIVIL RIGHTS BILL PASS IN 1957. THIS WAS, OF COURSE, JUST THE FORERUNNER OF MUCH MORE POWERFUL LEGISLATION HE PUSHED THROUGH AFTER HE BECAME PRESIDENT. SAYS THE AUTHOR:

VOICE: "THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT LYNDON JOHNSON WAS THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND POWERFUL LEADER IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE. BUT AS A RESULT OF HIS PREFERENCE FOR PRIVATE NEGOTIATIONS AND HIS PENCHANT, EVEN NEED, FOR CONCEALMENT, HE VIRTUALLY ABOLISHED DEBATE IN AN INSTITTUION WHERE DEBATE, ALTHOUGH FREQUENTLY FRIVOLOUS AND OFTEN IGNORED, HAD ALSO SERVED TO PUBLICLY EXPOSE PROBLEMS AND WARN OF ERROR."

EDITOR: HOW SKILLFULLY LYNDON JOHNSON HANDLED THE TRANSITION WHEN KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION PROPELLED HIM INTO THE WHITE HOUSE, IS WELL KNOWN. ALSO, HIS OWN MEMOIRS TESTIFY TO HIS ALMOST FRENETIC DISLIKE FOR THOSE WHOM HE SUSPECTED OF RIDICULING HIS SOUTHERN MANNERS. THIS WAS REFLECTED IN HIS PARANOIC RELATIONSHIP WITH ROBERT KENNEDY. THE AUTHOR, IN PARTICULAR, EXAMINES JOHNSONS DREAM OF A "GREAT SOCIETY."

EDITOR: (CONT) EVERY AMERICAN, SO HE SAID OFTEN, SHOULD NOT ONLY BE GUARANTEED AN EQUAL CHANCE, BUT HE SHOULD BE INSURED AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF TOTAL DEFEAT. HIS PROGRAM INCLUDED MEDICAL CARE FOR THE OLD, EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE YOUNG, TAX REBATES FOR BUSINESS, A HIGHER MINIMUM WAGE FOR WORKERS, SUBSIDIES FOR THE FARMER, VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR THE UNSKILLED, FOOD AND HOUSING FOR THE POOR. AND ABOVE ALL, HIS CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION ABOUT WHICH THE AUTHOR WRITES:

VOICE: "HAD HE DONE NOTHING ELSE IN HIS ENTIRE LIFE, HIS CONTRIBUTION TO CIVIL RIGHTS WOULD HAVE EARNED HIM A LASTING PLACE IN THE ANNALS OF HISTORY."

EDITOR: VIETNAM, OF COURSE, WAS HIS NEMESIS. ALL THE JOHNSON SKILLS IN DOMESTIC MATTERS AND ALL HIS STRIVING FOR CONSENSUS FAILED HIM HERE. WHAT THE AUTHOR CONTRIBUTES TO THIS WELL-KNOWN STORY IS A GREATER SENSE OF THE TRAGEDY THAT THIS ISSUE BROUGHT TO A MAN WHO HAD ACHIEVED SO MUCH FOR HIS COUNTRYMEN THAT HE WON A LANDSLIDE VICTORY IN 1964. BUT BY 1968, HE HAD BECOME MORE AND MORE ISOLATED. THE AUTHOR WRITES:

VOICE: "THE VERY QUALITIES AND EXPERIENCE THAT HAD LED TO HIS POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS WERE PRECISELY THOSE THAT NOW OPERATED TO DESTROY HIM. HIS TENDENCY TO RESOLVE CONFLICT INSTEAD OF ACCEPTING IT -- NOW LED HIM TO MANIPULATE AND ORCHESTRATE THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN ORDER TO SHAPE A FORMULA THAT COULD ACCOMODATE BOTH THE GREAT SOCIETY AND VIETNAM."

EDITOR: "EVENTUALLY, HE FAILED IN BOTH. IN CONCLUSION MISS KEARNS AGREES WITH THIS SUMMATION OF ELDER STATESMAN AVERELL HARRIMAN, WHICH SHE QUOTES ---

VOICE: "LBJ WAS GREAT IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. HARRY TRUMAN HAD PROGRAMS BUT NONE GOT THROUGH. KENNEDY HAD NO TECHNIQUE. FDR TALKED SIMPLY DURING THE CRISIS, BUT DIDN'T ACT ENOUGH LATER. JOHNSON WENT BACK PAST THE NEW FRONTIER ALL THE WAY TO THE NEW DEAL. HE LOVED FDR, AND IT WAS FANTASTIC WHAT HE DID. IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR VIETNAM HE'D HAVE BEEN THE GREATEST PRESIDENT EVER. EVEN SO HE'LL STILL BE REMEMBERED AS GREAT."

ANNCR: YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF AMERICA WEEKLY PROGRAM FROM THE BOOKSHELF, IN WHICH WE REPORT ON BOOKS AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY'S SELECTION WAS "LYNDON JOHNSON & THE AMERICAN DREAM" BY DORIS KEARNS. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT WEEK...(AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER SELECTION FROM THE BOOKSHELF. THIS IS _____.

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